

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَا أُنْجِ حَتَّى أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا



«I WILL NOT GIVE UP
UNTIL I REACH THE JUNCTION OF THE TWO SEAS
EVEN IF I MUST PRESS ON FOR MANY YEARS.»
[SURAH KAHF 18:60]

notes for a talk on Travel given by:

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
at

The Islamic Study Center
Charlottesville, Virginia

June 19, 2011/Rajab 13, 1432



لَا أُبْرِحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا

lā ʿabraḥu ḥatta ʿablughā majmaʿa-l-baḥrayni ʿaw ʿamḍiya ḥuqubā

I will not give up
until I reach the junction of the two seas,
even if I must press on for many years.”
(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:60)



©

June 19 2011/Rajab 13 1432

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
GreenMountainSchool.Org
Green Mountain School
313sand313@gmail.com

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
 إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَنَّهُ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ ۚ
 إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

subhāna-l-ladhī ʿasra bi-ʿabdihi laylan mina-l-masjidi-l-ḥarāmi
 ʿila-l-masjidi-l-aqṣa-l-ladhī bāraknā ḥawlahu li-nuriyahu min ʿāyātina;
 ʿinnahu huwa-s-samīʿu-l-baṣīr

Glory be to Him Who took His slave on a journey by night
 from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa,
 whose surroundings We have blessed,
 in order to show him some of Our Signs.
 He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.
 (Sūratu-l-ʾIsrāʾ 17:1)



وَلَقَدْ رَأَوْنَا لَوْلَا أُخْرَى • عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى •
 عِنْدَ هَاجِنَةِ الْمَأْوَى • إِذْ يَبْغِشُ السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَبْغِشَى •
 مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى • لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى •

wa laqadā raʾahu nazlatan ʾukhrā • ʿinda sidrati-l-muntahā •
 ʿindahā jannatu-l-maʾwā • idh yaghṣha-s-sidrata mā yaghṣhā •
 mā zāgha-l-baṣarū wa mā ṭaghā •
 laqadā raʾayā min ʿāyāti rabbihi-l-kubārā •

And indeed he saw him another time,
 at the Cedar Tree of the Furthest Boundary.
 Near to the Garden of Refuge.
 Where there covered the Cedar Tree what covered it.
 His gaze neither wavered nor did it stray.
 Indeed he saw the greatest Signs of his Lord.
 (Sūrah al-Najm 53:13-18)



A year has passed since we met here last Rajab to discuss *al-ʾIsrāʾ wa-l-Mirʿraj*. This year I would like to build on that archetypal journey of the Prophet ﷺ and this time talk about the travels we ourselves must undertake to arrive at spiritual understanding.

Some Muslims are content to fulfill the basic prescriptions to give witness, pray, fast, pay their zakāt and make ḥajj, and really not to go much beyond that. Alḥamdulillāh they are safe in doing that, but they often are rather like the Muslims of whom the Prophet ﷺ said, “Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing for his fast save hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleepiness.”

On the other hand, there are those who want more out of their practice of ʾIslam than hunger and sleepiness. Perhaps they may be from those who have come across the ḥadīth qudsī which reads:

“And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious (*fard*/فرض) duties I have obligated upon him. And when My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory (*nāfil*/نافل) deeds I come to Love him. When I Love him, I am the hearing with which he hears, and the sight with which he sees, and the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.” (al-Bukḥarī)

In any case however it happens for a person that they are awakened, the main thing is that something happens to cause them to want more out of their practice of ʾIslam than hunger and sleepiness.

This is indeed the first step of the journey: the beginning of travelling.

Among the ʿarifīn of the Muslim gnostics there is a general understanding that the journey is a four-fold one and we will try to elucidate for the listener or the reader the general structure or, rather, the consensus for the pattern of these four journeys for the seeker.

So we begin from the beginning in which one is fulfilling what Allāh ﷻ has ordered – the *fard* – the *wajib* (وجوب) – and in general just living the life. Somewhere in the midst of that a beam of sunshine or a sweet smelling breeze or a glimpse of some distant and evocative landscape strikes one’s heart and one feels the pull to do something more; or sometimes it comes as a result of tragedy and loss – especially of someone near and dear who is taken by Allāh ﷻ or other times by love lost that turns bitter and sour. Indeed the ways to awakening are numerous but the upshot is the same. One is galvanised to go beyond the limits of the known and familiar.

Very often the catalyst is the desire, sometimes strong, sometimes just a will o' the wisp, to get up and pray in the dark watches of the night – the voluntary (*nāfil*/نافل) ṣalatu-l-layl or *sunnah* ṣalatu-t-tahajjud in accordance with the words of Allāh ﷻ in Qur'ān:

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَهَاجِدْ رَنَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

wa mina-l-layli fatahajjadā bihi nāfilatan
laka ʿasa an yabʿaṭhaka rabbuka maqāman maḥmūdā

And stay awake for prayer during part of the night
as a voluntary action for yourself.

It may well be that your Lord will raise you
to a Praiseworthy Station.

(Suratu-l-ʾIsrāʾ 17:79)

And during those prayers one raises one's hands to Allāh ﷻ and calls out in deep supplication (duʿāʾ/دعاء).

اللهم اهْدني فيمن هديت، وعافني فيمن عافيت، و تولني فيمن
توليت، وبارك لي فيما أعطيت، وقتني شر ما قضيت، فانك تقضي
ولا يقضى عليك، وإنه لا يذل من واليت، تباركت ربنا وتعاليت

allahumma ʾihdinī fīman hadayt, waʿafinī fīman ʿāfayt,
wa tawallanī fīman tawallayt, wa bārik lī fīmā ʿāṭayt,
wa qinī šharra mā qaḍayt, fāʾinaka taqāḍī wa lā yuqāḍa ʿalayk,
wa ʾinnahu lā yadhīlu man wālayt, tabārakta rabbana wa taʿālayt.

Oh Allāh, guide me among those whom You have guided.
Grant me safety among those whom You have granted safety.
Take me into Your charge

among those whom You have taken into Your charge.

Bless me in what You have given me.

Protect me from the evil that You have decreed,
for You alone decree and nothing is decreed for You.
And there is no humiliation for those whom You guard.
Blessed and exalted are You, our Sustainer.



And sometimes – just sometimes – there is an answer – often subtle at first – and one feels that one's prayers are being heard and a feeling enters one's heart and the earth begins to move between your feet and then the ship is moving and the journey is begun.

This is the beginning of what will be a journey in four stages. In this first stage the seeker voyages from the world of custom, the world of habit, the world of sleep and forgetfulness, the world of creatures and the created to the Creator – to divine Being itself.

Sayyid Ḥaydar bin °Amūlī ﷺ says, “In the first voyage one moves toward Allāh ﷻ through the steps and dwellings of the soul until it arrives at the limit of the known and manifest horizon (*al-ufuqu-l-mubīn*) which is the limit of the station of the heart (*maqāmu-l-qalb*) at the very doorstep – indeed the threshold of the Divine Names (°asmā° ullāh al-ḥusnā/اسماء الله الحسنی).

The goal of this first journey in one’s travels is the rending or the tearing of the veils of plurality which hide the face (*wajh*) of Unity for only when the velis are torn can one begin to see beyond the mere appearance of things as they are or would seem to be.

وَيَخْرُونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَكُونُ وَجْهٌ بِهِمْ خُشُوعًا
قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا إِلَهُ الْجِنَّةِ إِنَّمَا تَدْعُوا أَسْمَاءَ الْحُسْنَى

wa yakhirrūna li-l-°adhqāni yabākūna wa yazīduhum khushū°ā.

qul °idā°u-llāha awi °idā°u-r-raḥman :
°ayyan mā tadā°ū fa-lahu-l-°āsmā°u-l-ḥusnā
they fall to the ground prostrating in tears,
and it increases them in humility

Say:

“Call on Allah or call on the All-Merciful,
whichever you call upon, the Most Beautiful Names are His.”

(Suratu-l-°Isrā° 17:109-110)



Whereas before one lived in the world of number, of plurality, of thing after thing, now one begins to live in and inhabit another world, even if only momentarily in the dark of the night, and one begins to travel to Allāh by Allāh and in Allāh and slowly the Names give way to Essence and one begins to see how the Many form the One; what is called the unitary totality (*°aynu-l-jam°*) which is referred to in °Injil when °Isā ﷺ says, “Let thine eye be single and filled with light.” (Luke 11:34) For surely if your eye become single your whole body shall be full of light.

And when your body is filled with the light that shines “in the darkness” Allāh ﷻ will be in all your thoughts and all things, great and small, reflect Allāh ﷻ Who made you for Himself to your self and you begin finally to know who you are.

This is the meaning, or better, the reality of *tawhīd* (توحيد) which is to make One out of the Many. To see that all of the Names are in Truth but the Name of One thing or one Being which is Allāh ﷻ.

In our deep contemplation of Qurʾān we become aware of the existence of a single and absolute truth that transcends the world; a unique and indivisible Being, who is independent of the entire creation. The indivisibility of Allāh ﷻ implies the indivisibility of the sovereignty of Allāh ﷻ which, in turn, leads to the concept of a just and coherent universe, as opposed to existential chaos.

But as long as this remains a concept it only appears distantly on the horizon (*al-ufuqu-l-mubīn*) of our being and we remain in the world of hunger, forgetfulness and sleepiness. When we act upon what is mentioned in the ḥadīth qudsī, “...My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory (*nāfl*/نافل) deeds I come to Love him.” When Allāh ﷻ Loves us He causes us to see beyond the near horizon and we no longer think or read about *tawhīd* but actually experience the truth of His Love in our beings and begin to see beyond or through the veils of plurality which hide the face (*wajh*) of Unity, for only when the veils are torn can one begin to see beyond the mere appearance of things as they are or would seem to be.

In the accounts of the *ʾisrāʾ wa-l-mirʾāj* (الإسراء والمعراج) it is mentioned that the Prophet ﷺ had to penetrate 70,000 veils. From this we also understand that although we have begun to feel the world moving under our feet and the wind in our hair this is just the beginning and there are many more veils that must be penetrated.

But one thing is finally clear to us through the experience which Allāh ﷻ has granted us and that is, that in Truth (*al-ḥaqiqah*) the Many are truly One, and once this is grasped we can also understand that although there are 70,000 veils there is, in Truth, only one veil that hides us from the Truth and that is the veil of our own self. Allāh ﷻ in His Infinite Mercy has given us the means to see beyond the veils of plurality which hide the Face (*wajh*) of Unity and allowed us, through His Love, to enter the world of *tawhīd* (توحيد).

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

huwa-l-^oāwwalu wa-l-^oākḥiru wa-l-dḥāhiru wa-l-bāṭin;
wa huwa bi-kulli shay^oin ^oalim

He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent:
and He has full knowledge of all things.

(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:3)

This gradual, and sometimes abrupt, process can be summed up under the rubric: The Transition from Theoretical Teaching to the Real Event of the Soul.

Most often the beginning of one's travel will involve a messenger or a caller as in the case of the Prophet ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ, and certain events will take place that separate the believing worshipper (^oabd / عبد) from the time and space in which they used to live to put them into another time and space.

For instance before the Prophet ﷺ took his night journey, the ceiling of the house in which he was staying was opened, and Jibrīl ﷺ descended and cut open his chest and washed it with Zamzam water. Then he emptied something from a container into the chest of the Prophet ﷺ to increase his wisdom as well as the strength of his belief. This was done to prepare him for that which he had yet to see in the upper worlds from among the wonders of the creation.

Now of course this was the experience of the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ and it is not expected that all who travel will be vouchsafed such an event, but one can say that such a happening is the prototype which compels us all to try to relive or experience it as we believe that truly our search will culminate finally in that mystical experience which will bring us closer to our Self.

Let me relate here an event that occurred in dream time.

There is a street in a city – a city somewhere in the East because none of the houses have windows but all of the houses have walls and in each blank wall ther a door is set. The streets are more or less empty of people though here and there are people to be seen mainly dressed in, at least in this dream, the kind of hooded wool robe called a *burnous*, usually white or dark brown or grey (like sheep) in color, worn by Berbers and the Arabs throughout North Africa.

They seem either to be coming from some place or to be on their way to some place as the time appears to be dusk or dawn. Perhaps they are on their way home from the *masjid* after *fajr* prayers but it could also be that they are on their way home after *maghrib* prayers.

I am walking down a street and come to a place where another street intersects and I happen to look up this street, actually more like an alley or a very narrow street called a *zanqah*, – and I say up as it is sloping and curving gently up hill away from me.

As I glance up the street I see, just where the street begins to curve out of view, a man in a white *burnous* is beckoning for me to come to him.

I am in no hurry and just more or less aimlessly walking (which is known as *flâneuring*¹) and I think to myself, “Let me see what he wants.” and so I turn and begin to walk up the hill towards him past the faceless walls set with doors, each of another color.

When I reach him he opens the door (this one a dark green metal one) set inside a larger gate that is big enough to allow a pick-up or a small lorry access and, with a wave of his hand, he ushers me in.

I find myself in a rather large courtyard called a *housh* which is common in that part of the world.

Looking around I see there are a couple of trucks with goods on them as well as a number of donkeys and a few camels. The *housh* is quite large and, with their backs against the wall, are a number of men, though there are also a few family groups, and some have small fires going and are cooking or making tea. Some people are eating and some smoking and others day-dreaming. Everybody appears relaxed and the atmosphere is quiet, calm and mellow. It would actually seem it is evening as the light is fast draining from the sky and I can make out a few stars in the clear air above me.

The man who waved at me and then ushered me in now seems to want me to follow him further to another door in the back.

1. From the French masculine noun *flâneur*—which has the basic meanings of a “stroller”, “saunterer”, or even, “a loafer”—which itself comes from the French verb *flâner*, which means “to stroll”. Baudelaire developed a derived meaning of *flâneur* which is that of “a person who walks the city in order to experience it”.

Having come this far I am keen, as one is in a dream, to see where this is all going and I take his lead, following him again through the door and down a rather twisting passageway that is paved in what seems like cobbles or bricks. There are some niches in the walls and these have lanterns or candles in them giving off an amber light.

Finally we come out of the passageway into a rather formal garden set in a courtyard surrounded by arched colonades, in the center of which is a long rectangular pool in which there are small sprays shooting up from fountains.

The colonades are filled with people, all of who are wearing the local *bournous*, and they are all making *dhikr* of Allāh ﷻ saying *lāā °ilahā °illa-llāh, lāā °ilahā °illa-llāh, lāā °ilahā °illa-llāh.*

I want to sit down with them and join them in the *dhikr* but the man, my guide, waves at me again to follow him further and we walk behind the rows of men making *dhikr* and I see we are coming to the end of the rectangular courtyard and there at the far end is a figure of light who is leading the *dhikr*.

I won't say more than this, which is only to say that all of us who take this journey do so because, inevitably, we do believe that by taking it and travelling, as it were, in the unknown we will come to the mystical realization which will reveal to us the truth of our being.

Its a bit like the lines in the song of *Suzanne*:

“Now Suzanne takes your hand
And she leads you to the river
She is wearing rags and feathers
From Salvation Army counters
And the sun pours down like honey on our lady of the harbour
And she shows you where to look
Among the garbage and the flowers
There are heroes in the seaweed
There are children in the morning
They are leaning out for love
And they will lean that way forever
While Suzanne holds the mirror
And you want to travel with her – And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust her
For she's touched your perfect body with her mind.”

To reiterate, the end of of the first stage which is the beginning of travelling – is the transition from the theoretical to the real.

The thirst is gone, you're wide awake, the ship really is moving and the air is definitely blowing in your hair and often your eyes are filled with tears – of gratefulness.

Narrated Mujahid رضي الله عنه: °Abdullah bin °Umar رضي الله عنه said, “The Prophet ﷺ took hold of my shoulder and said, ‘Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler.’”(Bukḥarī)

...and the caravan departs

Having begun our travels by following all that Allāh ﷻ has ordered – the farḍ (فرض) – the wajib (وجب) and in general living the life of the ordinary practicing Muslim and then having felt the pull and begun the practice of the voluntary (*nāfl*/نافل) which is, actually in truth, to follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ (for the nafl is what he did beyond what Allāh ﷻ ordered), and then having been granted the blessing of experience and traveled the first journey from the theo-retical to the real or at least having been granted a glance, reflect on these lines from Shāykh Ibn °Aṭā° °Illāh رحمته الله:

If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known,
pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this.

For, in truth, He has not opened it for you
but out of desire to make Himself known to you.

Do you not know that He is the One
who presented the knowledge of Himself to you,
whereas you are the one who presented Him with deeds?

What a difference between
what He brings to you and what you present to Him!



ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

dḥalika faḍlu-llāhi yu°tīhi mañy-yashā°u
wa-llāhu dḥu-l-faḍli-l-°aḍḥīm

“That is the bounty of Allāh which He bestows on whom He Wills.
And the Bounty of Allāh is without end or limit.”

(Sūratu-l-Jumu°ah 62:4)

Someone asked the Shaykh ﷺ, “Now that I have been granted to taste love, tell me, what is the drink (*shārb*) of love, what is the cup (*kāʿs*) of love, who is the cupbearer (*saqī*), what is the tasting (*dhāwq*), what is the drinking (*shurb*), what is repletion (*riy*), what is intoxication (*sukr*), and what is sobriety (*ṣahw*)?”

He ﷺ replied, “The drink is the light radiating from the beauty of the Beloved. The cup is the distillation of the subtle essence of the Mercy (*lutf*) which brings that light into contact with the lips of the heart. The Cupbearer is He who befriends the greatest of the elect and the righteous ones from among His slaves. He is Allāh ﷻ, the One who knows the capacities and affairs of His Friends. If to anyone there is disclosed that Beauty, if he enjoys it for one breath or two, and then even if the veil is dropped over it, he is a ‘taster’ (*dhawāq/ذواق*) who will yearn the rest of his life for another ‘taste’.

“If he continues for an hour or more sipping from the cup of love he becomes the ‘drinker’ (*sharāb/شارب*) and if the experience becomes continuous and he drinks until his veins become filled with the treasured lights of Allāh, then that is repletion (*tukhmah/تخمة*).

“Often one becomes unconscious of sense and mental perceptions so that he knows neither what is said nor what he said – that is intoxication (*thamila/ثمل*).

“Sometimes the cups circulate among them, states differ, they are turned back from oblivion to remembrance (*dhikr*) mystical states (*ʾahwāl*) and the statutory injunctions (*furūd*). They are not veiled from the physical attributes in spite of their having drunk as much as they could. That is the time of their sobriety, of the broadening of their mental vision and of the increase of their works. So by the stars of knowledge and the moon of unity they are guided across the night and by the sun of spiritual knowledge they obtain light.”

Having obtained the life, having at least drunk once from the cup, found the guide in prayer or dream, what then is the next stage of the journey?

The second stage is to take the path (*tariqah/طريقة*), and to take the path one needs a shaykh, a murshid, a pir, or in plain English: a spiritual guide.

I have written about this in great detail in my essay, “*On the Necessity of the Shaykh*” available on our web site but in brief —

وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

wa hadnāynā huma-ṣ-ṣirāṭā-l-mustaqīm

And we guided them to the straight way.

(Sūratu-ṣ-Ṣāāāffāt 37:118)

After the seed of blessing has fallen into the fertile soil of the heart by the Grace of Allāh ﷻ one must not let it wither. Rather one must place it in the care of a farmer who will protect it from the many ways it can be destroyed. In his care the seed will mature and bear fruit in accord with its true being. The above verse of the Qurʾān refers to that type of care.



In the ocean of the soul
it is impossible to swim and you may drown!
The only solution is to get on the Ship of Safety.

(*as-safinatu-n-najah*)

And so the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ declared:

“I am the Ark in the Infinite Ocean;
as are those who are my successors,
who also have my Vision.

We are the Ship of Safety in this Ocean.

Do not try to swim away.”

—Rumi—



In the domain of Love
do not take even a step without a Guide.

For on this road
he who has no Guide will lose the way for sure.

—Hāfiz—



It was Mawlay al-ʿArabi ad-Darqawī ﷺ who said: “Whoever wishes to travel the Path without a ṣhaykh, so the ṣhayṭān is his ṣhaykh”.

He was referring to those people who take *tariqah* from books.

When we look at the Qurʾānic story in Sūratu-l-Kahf about Prophet Mūsā ؑ and Sayyidinā Khidr ؑ, we see that the Prophet Mūsā ؑ was sent by Allāh ﷻ to go to seek a certain type of knowledge from Sayyidinā Khidr ؑ who possessed it in abundance.

But Sayyidinā Mūsā ؑ, even though he was a Prophet ﷺ, suffered from an inability to take guidance from someone he could not recognize precisely because of his own self esteem, even though Sayyidinā Khidr ؑ made clear to him from the start that he would not be able to take guidance (*hudal* هُدًى) (Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:61-83).

To take guidance there are three steps which a person must undertake. The first is to really put everything else behind you and become a true seeker with a pure intention to find the truth, knowing you don't know that truth. The second step is to go wherever you have to go and do whatever you have to do to find that truth, and the third step is called *suḥbah* — which means to enter into the company of someone who, for what ever reason that you even imagine or think, might be in touch with the truth you are seeking.



Those spiritual window-shoppers, who idly ask,
 “How much is that?” and say, “Oh, I’m just looking.”
 They handle a hundred items and put them down,
 — shadows with no capital —

What is spent is love and two eyes wet with weeping.
 But these walk into a shop,
 and their whole lives pass suddenly in that moment in that shop.
 Even if you don't know what you want,
 buy something anyway
 just to be part of the exchanging flow.
 Start a huge, foolish project, like Nūḥ ؑ.
 It makes absolutely no difference
 what people think of you.
 Rūmī, Mathnawī VI, 831-845



“Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing
 that we see too late the one that is open.”
 Alexander Graham Bell



In this second stage one travels under the guidance of one's shaykh from the limited and manifest horizon “al-ʿuḥḥā-l-mubīn” of one's limited and limiting “self” towards the supreme horizon, or as Sayyid Haider bin Amulī ؑ named it, ʿuḥḥā-l-ʿala (الأفق الأعلى).

Horizon in this context means “as far as you can see” or what you can imagine anything to be. When one is stuck in one’s limited self all one can see is the boundaries of one’s limited being – the face in the mirror. We measure everything by what we know of our own self and since our self is limited our view is, necessarily, limited.

What happens when we take on the *nafl* (supererogatory) prophetic practices is that Allāh ﷻ, as He has promised in the ḥadīth qudsī, by becoming the eyes by which we see, grants us in His Mercy and through His Love, a glimpse of the overarching high horizon.

A simple analogy can be found in the difference one experiences in looking out on the world when one is in a valley and when one climbs a nearby mountain.

The world is the same but one can simply see more of it.

But in order to climb that mountain one must have the guidance of the shaykh or guide who has himself climbed that mountain, and importantly as we will see when we discuss the fourth stage of the journey, returned to the valley to help others to climb the mountain.

The shaykh does this through a combination of further *nafl* practices, many of which are part of the inherited storehouse of the practices of the particular tariqah to which he belongs, counseling and guidance and, very importantly, the various types of work which he gives us in the form of tarbiyyah which serves to bring about our long lasting and, °inshallaah, permanent change.

I want here first to talk about the storehouse of received practices and then a bit in general about the practices of tarbiyyah.

The shaykh is one who has put his hand in the hand of one who has put his hand in the hand of one who has put his hand over many generations in the hand of °Alī ؑ who put his hand in the hand of the Seal of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

I mention °Alī ؑ in this context because it is he of whom the Prophet ﷺ said,

انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها. لا أحد يدخل البيت إلا من خلال البوابة.

“I am the city of knowledge, and °Alī is its door.

Nobody enters the house except through the door.”

and Allāh ﷻ says:

وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

wa^otu-l-buyūta min ^oabāwābiha wa ^ottāqu-llāha la^oallakum tuflihūn

So enter houses by their doors
and be aware of Allāh, so that hopefully you will be successful.
(Suratu-l-Baqarah 2:189)

What is not well understood in either the Sunni or the Shi‘ah world is what ‘Ali ؑ was doing during the time of the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafā’u-r-Rāshidūn*/الخلفاء الراشدون) ؑ.

Besides serving the *Khulafā’* as a consultant for many legal and military matters, Sayyidinā ‘Ali ؑ during this period was avidly teaching, which he did through the creation of a circle for learning (*ḥalaqah*/حلقة) in which he gathered people from all over to impart religious and spiritual knowledge. These circles (*ḥalaqāt*/حلقات) are, in turn, surrounded by angels who call out to the Creator ﷻ to tell Him that His servants are remembering Him in a gathering.

This is significant for a number of reasons, two being mentioned in sound narrations from the Prophet ﷺ

In a Ḥadīth Qudsī, Allāh ﷻ say and the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ: “Those that remember Me in their heart, I remember them in My heart; and those that remember Me in a gathering (i.e. that make mention of Me), I remember them (i.e. make mention of them) in a gathering better than theirs.”

Also, on the authority of Abu Hurayra ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Allāh ﷻ has angels who travel the highways and by-ways seeking out the people of dhikr. When they find people remembering Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, they call out to one another, ‘Come to what you hunger for!’ and they enfold them with their wings stretching up to the lowest heaven. Their Lord – who knows best – asks them, ‘What are My slaves saying?’ They say, ‘They are glorifying You, proclaiming Your greatness, praising You and magnifying You.’

Allāh ﷻ says, ‘Have they seen Me?’ They say, ‘No, by Allāh, they have not seen You.’ He says, ‘How would it be if they were to see Me?’ They say, ‘If they were to see You, they would worship, magnify and glorify You even more intensely.’

He says, ‘What are they asking for?’ They say, ‘They are asking You for the Garden.’ He says, ‘Have they seen it?’ They say, ‘No, by Allah, O Lord, they have not seen it.’” He says, ‘How would it be if they were to see it?’ They say, ‘If they were to see it, they would yearn for it even more strongly and seek it even more assiduously and would have an even greater desire for it.’

He says, ‘What are they seeking refuge from?’ ‘They are seeking refuge from the Fire.’ He says, ‘Have they seen it?’ He says, ‘How would it be if they were to see it?’ They say, ‘If they saw it, they would flee from it even harder and have an even greater fear of it.’

He says, ‘I testify to you that I have forgiven them.’ One of angels says, ‘Among them is so-and-so who is not one of them. He came to get something he needed.’ He says, ‘They are sitting and the one sitting with them will not be disappointed.’” [Agreed upon]

So for the 24 years during which the first three of Khulafā° ʿover-saw the affairs of the growing Muslim community Sayyidinā °Alī ʿ was teaching many members of that community their dīn.

Essentially this is the very beginning of what we call Taṣawwuf.

That this is so can be seen in the many chains of transmission (*silsilah, salāsīl* سلسلة, سلاسل) or trees of knowledge (*shajarah*) by which ṣūfis trace their spiritual lineage, with only major exception, back to Sayyidinā °Alī ʿ and those original circles in Madinah.

Often we hear the following °āyāt:

بَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

yāā °ayyuha-l-ladhīna °amanū °aṭī°u-llāha wa °aṭī°u -r-rasūla
wa °ūli-l-°amri minkum

Oh you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger,
and those from among you who are invested with authority!

(Sūrah an-Nisā° 4:59)

The question, especially in our times is, “We understand who Allāh ʿ and the Messenger ʿ are but who are ‘those in authority?’”

When asked that by the Companions (°ashāb) ʿ, the Prophet ʿ replied, “Those who inherit (يرثون) from me.”

Of course Suunis will say, “these are our *al-Khulafā°u-r-Rāshidūn* ʿ and Shī°ah will say, “these are our °Imāms ʿ.

But we ask, “Where are either of them today?” especially considering the following ḥadīth:

The Prophet ﷺ said: “There will come a time for my people when nothing will remain of ʾIslām except its name and they who call themselves by this name will be the people furthest from it and nothing will remain of Qurʾān except its outward form. The masājid will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders (*fuqahāʾ* / فقهاء) of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension (*fitnah*) will go out from them and return to them.” (ibn Babuya)

and Allāh ﷻ says:

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

wa laqad katabnā fi-z-zabūri min baʿdi-dh-dhikri
ʾanna-l-arḍa yarithuhā ʾibādiya-ṣ-ṣālīhūn

We wrote in the Zabūr after the Remembrance,

“The Earth will be inherited by My servants who work goodness.”

(Sūratu-l-ʾAmbiyāʾ 21:105)

According to at-Tabari, the Prophet ﷺ announced at a dinner to which he had invited his family of the Banu Hashim clan, in response to the message from Allāh ﷻ (74:1-2) to warn and inform his family that whoever assisted him in his invitation to call people to ʾIslām would become his brother, trustee and successor. Only ʾAli ؑ who was thirteen or fourteen years old, stepped forward to help him. This invitation was repeated three times, but ʾAli ؑ was the only person who answered the Prophet ﷺ, who finally declared that henceforth ʾAli ؑ was his brother, inheritor and vice-regent. Most of the adults present were uncles of ʾAli ؑ, and ʾAli ؑ, and Abu Lahab laughed at them and declared to Abu Talib that he must bow down to his own son, as ʾAli ؑ was now his ruler. This event is known as the Ḥadīth of Warning.

And still today they are laughing but those who know, know and those who place their hands in his hand continue into our time, and if you want to climb the mountain you will still need a guide, and who is a better guide than the one who has his hand in the hand of the man who has his hand in the hand of *the* man ﷺ.

In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 031.5920 The Book Pertaining to the Merits of the Companions ؓ of the Prophet ﷺ (*Kitāb al-Fadāʾil aṣ-Ṣaḥābah*) we find the following statement by the Prophet ﷺ.

“Oh people, I am a human being. I am about to receive a message from my Lord and I, in response to the call of Allāh ﷻ, (I will bid farewell to you), but I am leaving among you two weighty things (*thaqalayn*): the one being the Book of Allāh (al-Qur’ān) in which there is right guidance and light, so hold fast to the Book of Allāh and adhere to it.” He exhorted (us) (to hold fast) to the Book of Allāh and then said: “The second are the members of my household (*itrah*). I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family.”

This statement was made when the Prophet ﷺ was returning from his last pilgrimage in 632 and halted the caravan at Ghadir Khumm, and, after he had gathered the returning pilgrims for the communal prayer, addressed them with the words above.

Sunni and Shī‘ah sources report that he then called ‘Alī ibn Abi Tālib ؑ to his side, took his hand and raised it up declaring:

“For whoever I am a Mawla (Master) then ‘Alī is his Mawla.”

This quote is confirmed by both Shī‘ah and Sunni (at-Tirmidhī, al-Bayhaqi and even Ibn Taymiyyah in his *Minhāj as-Sunnah*) sources, but, almost needless to say, the quote is interpreted very differently.

But those who are at the end of the initatic chain (*silsilah* / سلسلة) or among the leaves on the tree of knowledge (*shajarah* / شجرة) know when Allāh ﷻ says in in the Verses of Light in Qur’ān,

نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ؕ

nūrun ‘ala nūr; yahdi-llāhu li-nūrihi man yashāa°

light upon light — Allāh leads to His Light whom He chooses.

(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:35)

that, among other things, Allāh ﷻ is pointing to how the light comes proceeding from hand to hand down the chain and through the branches of the tree to all those who have their hand in the hand of the Prophet of Light, Muḥammad ﷺ, the City of Knowledge through ‘Alī ؑ, the Gate to that knowledge and guidance.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ ۖ بَدَّ اللَّهُ فَقِ أَفْدِيهِمْ ؕ

°inna-l-ladhīna yubāyi‘ūnaka °innamā yubāyi‘ūna-llah;
yadu-llahi fawqa °aydihim

Those who swear their allegiance to you pledge allegiance to Allah.
The Hand of Allāh is over their hands.

(Sūratu-l-Faṭḥ 48:10)

While I know it may seem to some that I may be belaboring this point, and would like to know more about the substance of this second stage – *ṭarīqah* – of the journey, I very much feel that in the poisonous atmosphere in which we are living where sectarianism of all kinds is rife in the Muslim community, there is a lot of confusion around the Sunni – Shī'ah division and this is why the view of the Sūfī school is so important, as Ṣūfism bridges that split and brings unity to the community since Ṣūfīs understand both intellectually and functionally the truth inherent in both viewpoints while rejecting the extremes of both sides. This is entirely consistent with Allāh ﷻ declaring that this ummah is the ummah of the middle way which can also be understood as the way of the heart.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

wa kadḥalika ja' alnākum 'ummatan wasaṭan
li-takūnū shuhadā'a 'ala-n-nās

and in this way We have made you to be a community of the middle
in order that you might bear witness to the people.
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:143)



Now having, we hope, made clear both the need for the guide and from where the guide must come, and from whom the guide ultimately derives authority, let me speak/write something concerning the program the guide (shaykh, murshid, pir) sets for the seeker.

In understanding this program we must be clear that it is not one program but really many programs that differ in details but not in substance. That this is so is due to the proliferation of various schools (*turūq*) and branches (*ṭā'ifa*, plural طوائف *tawā'if*) and what might be called their different flavors or scents, remembering again that all the teachings derive directly from the Prophet ﷺ as explicated first by Sayyidinā 'Alī ؑ over the twenty some odd years he taught the *ḥalaqāt*, and then were developed by those who studied with and gave allegiance (*bay'ah* بَيْعَة) to him and in turn those who studied with his students and so on down to the present.

For instance if you were to ask me from whence I draw my immediate authority and permission I would say my shaykh ﷺ is from Egypt though his family is from Yemen by way of Maghrib.

Historically his family migrated from Yemen first to Madinah where a family member studied under °Imām Mālik (عليه السلام), married into the family of the Prophet (ﷺ), and then, after the opening of the far western lands of north Africa, went to serve the new Muslims of the Maghrib where the family stayed until summoned by Salah-uddīn Ayyubī to come to Egypt after the Fatimids, in order to bring Sunni teachings back to Egypt when many of those teachings and teachers had disappeared or had been downplayed and neglected.

During the mid to late 1900's the shaykh (عليه السلام) began to teach at the Azhar which is primarily a Shāfi'ī (شافعي) institution he became a a Shāfi'ī scholar (though a Mālikī (مالكي) by birth) and comes from a branch of the Shādhḍhulī Tariqah which derives from Sīdī Salamah Radī and historically from Shaykh al-Ḥanafī (عليه السلام) (we are *not* referring here to °Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (عليه السلام) in the line of Yaqūt al-Arsh (عليه السلام).

This is what I mean by the flavor or color or scent of both one's teacher and the teaching one receives.

My shaykh, Dr. Ibrahim Muḥammad al-Batawī (عليه السلام), was dubbed 'Shaykh al-Effendi by his shaykh and was told to teach foreigners (non-°Ajami) about °Islam (which he did for more than 25 years at al-Azhar and prior to that in Alexandria) and, as an American-born Muslim, I definitely fall into the category of non-°Ajami or *ferenghi*.

Now I, as his khalifah and 33rd in the line of succession, am teaching here and I have students from Africa, Europe, Asia, both Americas and so what is that? Flavor. Scent. Taste. Color etc.

But what do we teach?

Out reaching is primarily derived from the teaching of our Shaykh, Abu-l-Hassan ash-Shādhḍhulī (عليه السلام), the eponymous founder of the Shādhḍhulī order. In order not to take up more time or paper I refer you to two of my books, *Orisons* and *Origins* which go into very great detail as to who the Shaykh (عليه السلام) was, who his teachers (عليه السلام) were, who his inheritors (عليه السلام) are and what are the gist of his teachings.

To begin at the beginning I quote from him (عليه السلام), "If your spiritual insights (*kashf*) contradict Qur'ān or Sunnah then hold on to the Qur'ān and Sunnah and leave your *kashf* aside. Allāh (ﷻ) has vouchsafed for you the infallibility of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. *Kashf* is not so warranted, neither inspiration (*ilhām*) nor vision (*mushadah*)."

Thus the root (as well as the stock and branch) from which all our teachings are derived is Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ coupled with the Love of His Family ﷺ in accord with,

لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

lā 'as' alukum 'alayhi 'ajāran 'illa-l-mawaddata fi-l-qurba

I ask no reward of you save that you love my near of kin

(Sūratu-sh-Shurā° 42:23)



In this way the shaykh prepares for the traveller that which will help him or her on their way. This includes daily morning and nightly readings from the Qur'an as well as the repetition of specific Names drawn from the Beautiful Names of Allāh ﷻ (*°asmā'a-llāh al-ḥusnā*/أَسْمَاءُ اللَّهِ الْحُسْنَى), the daily practice of the *Wird ul-°Amm* which is comprised of the *°Istighfar* or asking for forgiveness, the *Darūd Sharīf* or the Sending of Blessings and Peace upon the Prophet and his family, the *Shahādah* or repetition of the formula *lāā-°illaha-°illa-llāh* and the Remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Name of Allāh ﷻ.

Along with these basics, are for the Shādhḍhulī, usually one or two of the *°ahzāb* (الأحزاب) such as the *Hizbu-l-Baḥr* (Orison of the Sea) or the *Hizbu-l-Barr* (Orison of the Earth) which are litanies composed by Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan ﷺ, or *Ṣalātu-l-Mashish* which is a litany on the Prophet ﷺ composed by Abū-l-Ḥasan's ﷺ teacher Ibn Mashish ﷺ. These various litanies are recited on a daily and/or weekly basis depending on the instructions of the shaykh in accord with the unique situation of each individual traveller.

It is very important to understand here that all of the above follows a pattern of teaching which now stretches back some one thousand years and more and has produced results in the form of seekers and travellers who have come to realise the truth for generation after generation at the hands of qualified teachers.

In today's commercial and mercenary world there are many self-styled teachers who operate without license (الإجازة/°ijāzah) and without permission (إذن/°idhin) and who cherry pick from books and off the internet various forms of spiritual practices and then set themselves up as teachers and offer courses in make believe schools and sell tickets for journeys on ships that never reach any shore.

This last point is important. Some times today one hears of *shuyukh* with hundreds if not thousands of students. From our perspective this is quite impossible as the *shaykh*, if he is *shaykh* of *tarbiyyah* or training, is hard put to deal with more than a few handfuls (at most) of students at any one time as each student has unique needs and problems which include not only their direct needs but also, very often, the needs of spouses and children and even whole families. At best such *shuyukh*, many of who are in fact authentic, in the sense that they come from known lines and clear antecedents, can be termed *shuyukh* of *tabarka* in so far as what they dispense is a form of general blessing on the student but not real training.

Real training requires constant, or at the very least, periodic personal interaction with the *shaykh*, who is constantly assessing the progress or lack of progress of the student. Part of this interaction includes what is known as, and to which we have earlier alluded, the whole area of *tarbiyyah* which is the real time training of a student so that they finally are able to go beyond the limited horizon of the self and approach the unlimited horizon of being.

Now *tarbiyyah* is not what must people think it is. For instance; I am a *shaykh* of *tarbiyyah* and one of my ways of training consists of teaching students how to drive cars and also how to mow lawns or vacuum the *zawiyyah* or staple books or record lectures or print CD's or cook the food for the weekly communal meal (*langar*) or wash the dishes after the meal, or set the table, for that matter.

“Doesn't sound very spiritual.” you say.

Well after ³Islām (surrender/الإسلام) there is ³Imān (faith or belief/إيمان) and after ³Imān there is ³Ihsān, and ³Ihsan (إحسان), which can be translated as “excelling” or “doing things beautifully”, was defined by the Prophet ﷺ as “worshipping Allāh as if you saw Him knowing if you do not see Him surely He sees you.”

You might also say that ³Ihsān is a matter of taking one's inner faith and belief (³*imān*) and manifesting that faith and belief in both deed and action; a sense of social responsibility borne from religious convictions. In contrast to the emphasis of ³*islām* which is what one should do, and ³*imān* which is why one should do it, the concept of ³*ihsān* is primarily associated with intention (*niyyah*/نية). One who excels and “does what is beautiful” is called '*muhsin*'.

While traditionally °Islāmic jurists (*al-fuqahā°*/الفقهاء) have concentrated on °Islām and theologians (*al-°ulemā°*/العلماء) on °Imān, the Šūfis have focused their attention on °Iḥsān and tarbiyyah is all about developing this sense of °iḥsān – especially in daily life.

Perhaps you can see from this how learning how to drive a car or mow a lawn or wash the dishes or vacuum etc. can really make all the difference in one’s spiritual development.

If this connection is still not quite clear please see the movie *Karate Kid* which deals with a form of tarbiyyah called *wax on – wax off*.

According to Ḥabīb °Umar ﷺ, “Every Shaykh established his path according to his own methodology. Some of them spend their time in people’s company nurturing them. Others give seekers abundant litanies (°awrād) of prayer and fasting and other acts of worship to perform. Others place seekers in the service of others. They make them carry firewood on their backs to sell in the market and then they make them give what money they earn from that in charity. Each Shaykh chooses the appropriate method.”

When all of this is put together starting with the fulfillment of the basic duties prescribed for Allāh ﷻ for all Muslims, coupled with taking on the various voluntary (*nawāfil*) practices of the Prophet ﷺ plus the implementation of other spiritual practices developed first by Sayyidinā °Alī ؑ and further developed and augmented by his illustrious successors from the awliyā° karām and the mashhā°ikh (مشائخ) ﷺ, including the practices of Sonic Theology involved in the various daily recitations of Qur°ān, Dhikr, Darood, °Awrād and °Aḥzāb and the implementation of centuries of spiritual insight in the intense personal training (*tarbiyyah*) of the seeker, you create a synergy which is just possibly capable of bringing the seeker, the traveller to the summit of the mountain where he or she is finally able to see beyond the narrow confines of his or her individual limited horizon, and finally see the overarching horizon and see beyond the veils of plurality which hide the Face (*wajh*) of Unity, and allow the seeker, through His Love, to enter the world of *tawḥīd* (توحيد). and not just as a quick glimpse but as a sustained vision then the seeker, the traveller enters in to the ḥaqiqah.

Shaykh °Abdu-sh-Šahīd Azhary puts it like this:

إِنَّ الطَّرِيقَ شَرِيعَةٌ وَطَرِيقَةٌ وَحَقِيقَةٌ فَاسْمَعْ لَهَا مَا مَثَلًا .

The path is shari'ah, tariqah and haqiqah.

Listen to it carefully with examples.

فَشَرِيعَةٌ كَسَفِينَةٍ وَطَرِيقَةٌ كَالْبَحْرِ ثُمَّ حَقِيقَةٌ دُرٌّ غَلَا

Shari'ah is like ship and tariqah is like the sea.

Haqiqah is the pearl in the sea.

فَشَرِيعَةٌ أَخَذُ بِدِينِ الْخَالِقِ وَقِيَامُهُ بِالْأَمْرِ وَالنَّهْيِ أَنْجَلًا

Shari'ah is to stick to the religion of the Creator,
to obey His orders and avoid his prohibitions.

وَطَرِيقَةٌ أَخَذُ بِأَحْوَطٍ كَالْوَرَعِ وَعَزِيمَةٌ كَرِيَاضَةٍ مُتَبَتَّلًا

Tariqah is to follow precautions,
like wara'a (scrupulousness)² and riyadah (exercise)³

وَحَقِيقَةٌ لَوْصُولُهُ لِلْمَقْصِدِ وَمُشَاهَدَةُ نُورِ التَّجَلِّيِّ بِانْجِلَا

Haqiqah is to reach the desired destination
and to see the Nūr of Allah without a veil.



and Allāh ﷻ asked.

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا

°alastu bi-rabbikum qalū balā shahidnā

“Am I not your Lord?

[and all who would ever be replied]

“Surely! We *see* it is so.

(Sūratu-l-°Ārāf 7:172)

وَإِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ

wa-°inna °ilā rabbīnā lamunqalibūn

and surely to our Lord we shall return.

(Sūratu-z-Zukhrūf 43:14)

2. On the authority of °Abū Hurayra ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Sometimes when I return to my family, I find a date on my bed or elsewhere in my house, and raise it to my mouth, but then fear that it might be from someone's charity, so I put it aside." [Despite his absolute poverty, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was not permitted to accept charity.]
3. Physical and spiritual acts of striving and exertion.

By forgetting everything else, the innate fitra in all things coupled with the remembrance that there is only Allāh ﷻ will dawn on the seeker causing the seeker to realise that, in Truth, only Allāh ﷻ is.

Ḥaḥiqah then is arriving at that point and witnessing the light of Allāh ﷻ. This is reflected in the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ when he questioned Ḥarīṭha bin Mālīk ؓ on his claim to be a true believer, “Every true thing has a reality so what is the reality of your faith?”

He replied: “My lower self has no desire for this world. Stones and earth are equal to gold and silver in my sight and I have spent my days in a state of thirst and my nights in a state of wakefulness.”

His holding fast to the religion of Allāh ﷻ and obeying His orders is Shari‘ah; his taking a position of extreme scrupulousness (*warā’*), being strict upon himself by spending his nights awake and his days in a state of thirst and denying his lower self its desires is Ṭariqah; the unveiling to him of the states of the next life is Ḥaḥiqah.

In another transmission (also recorded by at-Tirmidhī) Ḥarīṭha bin Mālīk ؓ says, “My lower self has no desire for this world. I have spent my days in a state of thirst and my nights in a state of wakefulness. It is as if I am clearly looking at the Throne of my Lord. It is as though I can see the people of Paradise visiting one another therein. It is as if I can see the people of the Fire suffering therein.”

The Prophet ﷺ said: “You have attained knowledge so hold fast to it. You are a slave whose heart Allāh has illuminated.” (at-Tirmidhī)

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal ؓ wrote in a poem on this theme:

Open your eyes now,
before you think you will die.
When you die,
you move to another world,
like passing through a wall into the next room.
But in truth there is no death,
because Allāh did not give you life in order to kill you.
Live in Allāh.
to be in everything, nothing.
The nothingness of self in Allāh is not death but life.
You are the truth of Allāh,
but the truth is a hidden treasure
and the treasure of your truth is hidden within you.

— *al-ḥaqīqat illāhi* —

the truth of Allāh does not go.

She endures in everything,

and nothing could exist without that truth within it.

The truth has no begining,

so nothing can bring about her end,

but receives its essence from her;

even death is true only by virtue of the power of truth.



The Prophet ﷺ said: “Ṣḥarī^cah is my words (°*aqwalī*), ṭarīqah my actions (°*amalī*) and ḥaqīqah my states (°*aḥwalī*).”

We can deepen our understanding of these words by looking at the instructions given by °Ibārāhīm ؑ to his people in Sūratu-l-An°ām (6:74-83) which tells the story of how °Ibārāhīm ؑ and the story of the stars, moon and sun.

The first instruction is for the guidance of the common people, the second for the elite and the third of the elite of the elite - in line with the three distinctions of ṣḥarī^cah, ṭarīqah and ḥaqīqah.

The first symbolizes the light of goodness, which belongs to the people of ṣḥarī^cah, the people of the outward and the common people in their search for the truth and in their going beyond. This is so because the star of this world is like the light of goodness in man. The second symbolizes the light of the intellect, and those of this station who are searching for the truth and the journeying beyond are the people of ṭarīqah, the people of the inward and the elite. This is because the moon in this world is like the light of the intellect in man. The third symbolizes the light of sanctity, known as the light of Reality. Those who are seeking the Real are the people of ḥaqīqah, the people of the inward of the inward and the elite of the elite. This is because the light of the sun in this world is like the light of sanctity in man - in accordance with the words of Allāh ﷻ:

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِإِسْلَامٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ

°afaman ṣḥaraḥa-llahu ṣadrahu li-l-°islāmi
fa-huwa °ala nūrim-mir rabbihi

Is he whose heart Allah has opened for Islam
so that he is on light from his Lord (like the hard-hearted)?

(Sūratu-z-Zumar 39:22)

Thereafter, there must follow a going beyond: by this I mean a going beyond the light of the Real. This is because the one who sees, the seen and the connecting light between them are three distinct things which would mean multiplicity. Vision and witnessing in the realm of divine unity does not admit of this; rather there must be a crossing beyond to a point where unity is attained. This point is reached by the annihilation of the knower in the known and the witnesser in the witnessed.

In the story of ʾIbrāhīm عليه السلام with his people, we see how he argued with them about Allāh عز وجل and His existence by successively rejecting the stars, moon and sun to be truly the 'Lord', and finally turning his face to the One who created Him, thus proving the createdness of objects by the changes they undergo and the fact that they move from one state to another, because when he saw the star, he said 'This is my Lord', to the end of the verses. So he realized that this object, since it changed and moved from one state to another, was ephemeral, controlled and created, and that it must have a creator. And that is why he said after that,

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

ʾinnī wajjahtu wajhiya li-l-ladhi faṭara-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍ

Surely I turn my face to the Creator of the Heavens and Earth.'

(Sūratu-l-Anʿām 6:79)

Here we are beginning to touch on the next stage of the journey which is Maʿarifah. I am getting ahead of myself as I have not yet finished discussing the realm of Ḥaqīqah so let me go back a bit.

In speaking of the experience of ḥaqīqah I said that this point is reached by the annihilation of the knower in the known and the witnesser in the witnessed.

There can be no sense of *two* in the moment of realisation.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

kullu man ʿalayha fān

wayabāqa wajhu rabbika dhū-l-jalālī wa-l-ʾikrām

everything upon it shall vanish

but the Face of your Lord will remain,

Master of Majesty and Generosity

(Sūratu-r-Raḥmān 55:26-27)

Thus fanā° or annihilation is an integral part of the experience of the haqīqah, just as baqā° or abiding is an integral part of maʿarifah.

First things first.

If you want to know Allāh ﷻ you cannot *be*, because in true knowledge (*haqīqah*) there is no room for the knower and the known, for that is only partially knowing.

Billy Holliday sang a song that goes,

“*You better go now, for I love you much too much.*”

Or as Rābiʿa al-Baṣrī ﷺ said, “*I am the source of my problems.*”

As we said above fanā° (فناء) is the term for annihilation or extinction or disappearance and, as such, it means to annihilate your self, while remaining physically alive. Persons having entered this state are said to have no existence and be in unity with Allāh ﷻ.

Realatively speaking of course, since Allāh ﷻ is One without an Other so it cannot ultimately be said there is any possiblity of the union of the contingent or relative with the unlimited Absolute.

The soul, that is, the combined subtle centers (*laṭāʾif*/لطائف), used to know Allāh ﷻ before it united with this body. It used to have a little inclination, knowledge and love towards Allāh ﷻ. It had been given the strength and potential to become exalted and promoted. But it could not improve before uniting with this body because to improve it had to unite with the body. For this reason, first the soul was given an affection towards this body. Then, it was allowed to go towards the body. It threw itself upon the body. Being very fine and very expansive, it sank and penetrated all parts of the body. It became unrecognizable, unknown in the body. It forgot about itself. It came to think of itself as the body. It lost itself in the body. Thus, most people consider themselves only as bodies. Being unaware of the existence of the soul, they disbelieve in it.

However Allāh ﷻ being very merciful, sent messages to men, that is, to the souls imprisoned in the body of the earth, through Prophets ﷺ. He invited the people to Himself. He prohibited them from being dependent upon the dark body of their limited self. He who was destined to be good in eternity hears and obeys the order of Allāh ﷻ and puts an end to his dependence upon the dark body of earth.

The traveller bids farewell to it and goes back up to his former heights where on the “Day of Alastu bi-Rabbikum” he and all souls saw Allāh ﷻ. His love of this origin, towards his *ʿaṣl* (أصل), which he used to feel before uniting with the body, increases gradually. His love towards a transient being decreases. When the traveller thoroughly forgets about this dark and obscure darling of his and when there is no love left, he attains the *fanāʾ* of the body. From then on, if Allāh ﷻ grants His favors and blessings the traveller will make progress, and gradually will begin to forget about himself, too. As this oblivion increases, he will forget himself thoroughly and will come to *know* Allāh ﷻ.

The crucial word here is “*know*” and not “*be*”.

Many travellers, including Maṣṣūr al-Hallaj ؑ have gone down the whirlpool of the confusion of knowing and being; of seeing and being. Or better...seeing and Being. Thus He Himself says: When He intends anything, He says: “Be, so and it is”,

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

ʿinnamā ʿamruhu ʿidha ʿaradā shayʿan ʿan yaqūla lahu kun fayakūn
(Sūrah Yā Sīn 36:82)

meaning that if He wishes to bring something into outer existence from those things existent in the realm of knowledge, then He indicates this by making it manifest in existence after its non-existence, thereby making visible that which was hidden. As He Himself says in the Qurʾān, And His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and the earth.

هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَا يَبُلَى

hal ʿadulluka ʿala shajarati-l-khuldi wa mulki la yabāla

Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality
and a kingdom which decays not?

(Sūrah Ṭā Hā 20:120)

seem to indicate the Absolute Tree of Existence, which is the world with all its ramifications, since its branches, leaves and flowers are the dependent existent beings: and the idea is that anyone who witnesses this tree together with its perfections, names and attributes will be in a kingdom which decays not.

But these, of course, are the words of the Shayṭān to our father °Ādam ﷺ, which is why one must understand the difference between seeing and being, for in the end and in the beginning only Allāh can truly be said to Be.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

huwa-l-°āwwalu wa-l-°ākhiru wa-ḍḥ-ḍḥāhiru wa-l-bāṭinu
wa huwa bi-kulli shay°in °alīm

He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward
and He has power over all things
(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:3)

In fanā°, memories and thoughts are rubbed out and removed from the heart so that the traveller forgets all but Allāh ﷻ. Not to be able to remember anything means that knowledge and everything else is gone. In fanā° all knowledge of self must be wiped out - eradicated. As oblivion increases, the traveller finally forgets the dark body of self thoroughly and no longer does the traveller know any being besides Allāh ﷻ. Thus, he will also attain the fanā° of the soul and fully enter the world of pure monotheism (*at-tawḥīd*/توحيد).

The coming to this world of the soul is the attainment of the second fanā°, which it could not attain *without* coming to this world.

If the nafs, or sense of self, accompanies the soul (*ruh*) in this way, it will be purified too. That is, it too will attain its own fanā°. But if the nafs reaches the level of the heart and identifies with it and remains there instead of being exalted, it will not attain extinction and will not become tranquil or fully at peace (*muṭma°innah*/مطمئنة).

From this you will understand that fanā° is not quite as simple as it would appear on first glance as the entire 'bundle' of the body must reach this extinction which means, functionally, the nafs, the qalb and the ruh must all finally pass away into the haqiqah of Allāh ﷻ as well as the sirr, kḥafī and °akhfā°.

This subject is bound up with the study, understanding and experiencing of the subtle psychospiritual centers (*laṭā°if*/لطائف) of the constituent soul, which will have to wait for another gathering where we can discuss this subject in greater detail. I refer the reader to page 322 of the *Orisons of the Shadhḍhulī* for a general description and location in the physical body of these subtle organs.

Dr. Osman Yahya in his *Theory of Akbarian Theophanies*⁴ explains, “Light is the link which binds being to knowledge. It is the crucible of the final transmutation. It is through It and in It that the nature of knowledge is transformed into being in the heart of the gnostic. Just as the nature of being in turn is transformed into knowledge, and it is then that the most subtle mysteries are revealed in the inmost depths of his heart and the reality of things appears to him in their archetypal form.

When Light shines on the mirror of the heart it is gradually diffused in the same manner as the irradiation of the existential theophanies. Each particle of Light projects spiritual knowledge according to distinctive nuances of colour. One may thus differentiate between what our Master, Shaykhyu-l-ʿAkbar, Ibn ʿArabi ﷺ calls :

(a) nūr al-ʿanwār (The Light of lights). This comes from the essential theophanies of absolute Truth. Ibn ʿArabi ﷺ sometimes calls it “the dazzling irradiations” which provoke the annihilation of the being and cannot be perceived by him except in the most intimate secret of his heart (*as-sirr*). This secret of the heart is an uncreated substance, of celestial origin, by which man gains access to the superior angelic and divine world. It is the theophany of the Light of lights which reveals the absolute reality in its most transcendent aspect, and causes certainty at its highest degree to be born in the heart. Ibn ʿArabi ﷺ calls this form of knowledge *haqq-al-yaqīn* (absolute Certainty), and it is the fruit of direct experience.

(b) ʿanwār al-maʿāni (The Light of the intellect). By this term, Ibn ʿArabi ﷺ refers to the intellectual knowledge transmitted by these theophanies at the moment of their irradiation in the heart. This light is the way of access to the meaning of Truth as it is grasped by human intelligence. Thanks to it man sees the reality of existence in the world of Unicity with the eye of the heart. He also perceives the link which unites all things to Allāh. Thanks to the irradiation of the theophany of the Light of the intellect in the heart, Certainty is established (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) – Certainty arising from direct vision.

(c) ʿanwār al-tabiʿā (The Light of nature). This refers to the learning and knowledge which human reason acquires under the influence of the existential theophanies in Act.

4. theophanies are sensible signs by which the presence of Allāh ﷻ is revealed.

It is here that the gnostic and the philosopher concur in the acquisition of learning. At this level, they join together in studying the exterior phenomena of existence: their appearance, their evolution and their disappearance. But the gnostic perceives them as an effect of the celestial lights propelled on to the stage of outward existence whilst at the same time detecting beneath the surface the shadow of the superior Being. Thus, in the world of multiplicity the sublime signs of the world of Unification appear to him. Philosophers and learned men only see isolated earthly phenomena. The influence of the theophanies of the lights of nature produces in the heart a form of knowledge or *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (Certainty arising from knowledge).

The world of Unity is the domain where the existential theophanies of the divine Essence are manifested ; the world of Unicity is the domain of theophanies of divine Attributes; the world of Unification is the domain where the divine theophanies occur, extrinsically and intrinsically, in Act. Knowledge and illumination at the level of being follow the same process.

The theophanies of the Essence at the level of being are comparable to the theophanies of the Light of lights at the level of knowledge. The theophanies of Attributes at the level of being are comparable to the theophanies of the Light of the intellect at the level of learning. The theophanies of Acts at the level of the being relate to the theophanies of nature at the level of knowledge of matter. There is therefore a perfect concordance between the three forms of unity of the theophanies of Being and those of knowledge.

Theophanies and Liberating Experience

For Ibn ‘Arabi رحمته الله, the theophanies of lights are the sources of gnosis and knowledge, and transmit learning and knowledge through the organs of man’s senses in the form of waves of light. As we have already said, lights are the principles of existence in Ibn ‘Arabi’s رحمته الله perception and it is due to the effect of their emanation and diffusion that things move and come to life. Knowledge and existence are joined together in human consciousness at the level of the spiritual plane and man’s ultimate destiny. Therefore for man light is principle, means and end. It is at the origin of his condition of being for it is an integral part of his constitution and of all elements of life – simple or complex. It is also the channel through which man subsists on the material and spiritual planes.

It is both food and drink and the essence of sensible, rational and spiritual knowledge. Lastly, it is the final destiny of man for it is through it that immortality is achieved.

If what we have just explained comes from the truth, it is easy for us to grasp the close links which exist between the notions of theophany and liberating experience. That leads us to examine this particular aspect of Ibn ʿArabi's ﷺ thought, viz. liberating experience which is the pivot of his general theory of divine existential theophany. It is thanks to the divine theophanies that the man on the Way is guided in his quest for perfection through the stages and abodes up to the highest station. The spiritual knowledges which irradiate his being are intangible realities which spring from the source of absolute Truth. They fill his heart with joy and happiness ; they arouse in him the taste for perfection and the desire to attain saintliness. They penetrate the whole of his being, his thought, his will, his sensibility, his consciousness, his feelings and his aspirations, transformed into energies of light and fire. Then the man becomes a living witness to purity, saintliness and redemption."

The divine theophanies are essentially the outpouring of the Beauty, the Perfection and the Love of Allāh ﷻ expressed in the immense theatre of the universe. When the traveller can integrate this experience it is possible to arrive at what can be termed the fanā° of fanā° or the annihilation of annihilation, in which the traveller becomes oblivious to their particular state of fanā°, and ceasing to be, enters seamlessly into the state of baqā° or perpetuity and thus crosses to the fourth stage of travel which is known as maʿarifah.

Oh humankind!

One who knows his self also knows Me;

one who knows Me seeks Me,

and one who seeks Me certainly finds Me;

one who finds Me attains all his aspirations and expectations,

and prefers none over Me.

Oh humankind!

Be humble that you can have knowledge of Me.

One who renounces his self finds Me.

In order to know Me, renounce your own self.

A heart which has not flourished and been perfected is blind.



من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه

man °arafa nafsih fa qadā °arafa rabbih

“Who knows himself knows his Lord⁵.”

Allāh ﷻ says,

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ

wa lā takūnū kālladhīna nasu-llāha fa °aṅsāhum °aṅfusahum

Do not be like those who forgot Allāh

so He made them forget themselves.

(Sūratu-l-Hashr 59:19)



The state of *ḥaqīqah*, involving as is does *baqā'* or residing or perpetuity or permanency, is a particular state of life with Allāh ﷻ, through Allāh ﷻ, in Allāh ﷻ, and for Allāh ﷻ and functionally this means that, whilst in the past the traveller may have been absorbed (*fanā'*) in “other” realms the state of *ḥaqīqah* demands that the traveller be absolutely present or literally to be here now.

Knowing this in an intellectual dimension however leaves one far from the actuality. What is necessary are the means of internalisation.

The eight principles formulated by the Central Asian Ṣufī teacher °Abdu-l-Khālīq Gajadwani (d. 1179) are as good a place as any to get some idea of what the means of *baqā'* might look like in practice.

1. *Hosh dar dam* — awareness of breathing

Being aware or conscious of your breathing. Breathing deeply in a natural rhythm without being preoccupied by breathing. Inhaling and exhaling while maintaining remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

-
5. Though many claim this to be Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth there is no consensus on this. Abu al-Mudḥaffar ibn al-Sam°anī said..., “It is not established as Prophetic ḥadīth. Rather, it is related from Yahya ibn al-Mu°adh ar-Razī – that is, from his words.” This is also what °Imām Nawawī said, affirming that, “It is not established.” [Sakḥawī, *al-Maqasid al-Hasana* 1.220] Thus it would not be permissible to ascribe it to the Prophet ﷺ. However, the words themselves are sound in meaning, and the great masters of the spiritual path quoted them extensively. The meaning is also established by clear texts of the Qur°ān and Sunnah, such as the words of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, “Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him before you.” [at-Tirmidhī, and others]

2. *Nazar bar qadam* — watching over the steps

Watching over your steps, ie being aware of your intention. Paying attention, watching where you are going and not being distracted from your goal, maintaining awareness and being open to opportunities, so that you do the right thing at the right time.

3. *Safar dar watan* — travelling in the [your own] homeland

Making an interior journey, ie inside your self, observing oneself in a detached and not overly-critical manner, learning from one's errors and travelling from blameworthy to praiseworthy qualities.

4. *Khalwat dar anjuman* — retirement in company

Developing the ability to detach from and distance your self from external noise, disturbance and confusion when in company, and remain tranquil, perhaps with the aid of a dhikr or darood sharif. Also being able to re-attach your attention to the outward when necessary. Though outwardly though you are in the world, inwardly you are with Allāh ﷻ.

5. *Yad kard* — remembering, recollecting exercises

Remembering experiences you have had and that you are a member of the School and a part of the Tradition from which one may draw positive energy and derive strength. Using inner or vocalized dhikr, remembrance, outward recitation of the Qur'ān or repetition of the Divine names, to remain attentive and alert so that the heart becomes aware of the presence of Truth (al-Haqq).

6. *Baz gasht* — restraint

Being self-disciplined, for example cultivating the quality of patience, keeping your thoughts from straying when repeating the Shahādah (the declaration of the Oneness of Allāh ﷻ and the acceptance of Muḥammad ﷺ as His prophet), being repentant and returning to righteousness.

7. *Nigah dasht* — watchfulness, use of special faculties

Concentrating on the presence of Allāh ﷻ. Being alert, watchful for and open to subtle perceptions, positive energy, positive opportunity and positive impacts. Being watchful over passing thoughts.

8. *Yad dasht* — keeping of the memory, sensing of the being and the body

To these eight principles Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhārī (1318–1389), founder of the Naqshbandi Order added three more which are often called, or known as, the “stops” (*wuquf*/وقف).

9. Wuquf-e zamani — time-halt (or pause)

Suspending intellect, judgement, preconceptions and conditioned thought. Reprising your thoughts and actions. Accounting for how one's time is spent, being thankful for acts of righteousness and asking forgiveness for wrongdoing.

10. Wuquf-e adadi — number-halt (or pause)

Carrying out exercises involving numbers, such as the awareness of the number of repetitions when carrying out your silent heart dhikr exercise, and certain forms of counting using the Abjad system.

11. Wuquf-e qalbi — heart-halt (or pause) or visualisation

Visualising one's heart (*Qalb*), with the name of Allāh ﷻ inscribed on it, and identifying with Truth or with Allāh ﷻ.

Of course all of the *turūq* have evolved their own methodologies but I cite the above because of the congruency of the system and the ease by which these can be understood in terms of your practice.

In the end what is necessary is understanding how to return from absorption or *fanā*⁵ into subsistence or *baqā*⁶ in your daily life as some one who has “returned” (as it were) from another world to once again take up one's life in this world but with the various major difference of having reached the top of the mountain, or at least *a* mountaintop and having realised all or something of the overarching reality of the unlimited horizon of existence or, at least, the possibility of existence and, very importantly, spent some “time” or rather “no-time” in the state of non-existence or not-being.

The ramifications of life in *baqā*⁶ are in some way congruent with what in Buddhism is called the ‘Bodhisattva Vow’⁶ which is a vow one makes to actively live one's life in a way that helps bring about the end of confusion and suffering both for one's self and for others.

6. In the various Bodhisattva vows (sometimes called the Bodhisattva Precepts) practitioners take a vow stating that they will strive for as long as *samsara* endures to liberate all sentient beings from illusion and lead them to enlightenment. The practitioner does not seek awakening solely for him/herself, but chiefly for the sake of freeing all other beings and aiding them to reach freedom from illusion. This can be done by cultivating moral and spiritual perfection in the service of others.

These then are some of the parameters of the ma[°]arifah (المعرفة) as it relates to subsistence or residing or permanency in daily life by recognizing and knowing ([°]ārif) through direct experience the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and the vastness of His Dominion and the expanse of the Benevolence and Mercy of Allāh ﷻ and, having recognised it, acts upon it in life to benefit yourself and others.

يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمَفْلُحُونَ

yad[°]ūna ila-l-khayri wa ya[°]murūna bi-l-ma[°]rūf;

[one]...who calls to the good,
and enjoins [good] by what is *known* (to be right),
(Sūrah °Al °Imrān 3:104)

وَقُلْنَا قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

wa qulna qawlam-ma[°]rūfā
and utter words that are *known* (to be right)
(Sūratu-l-Aḥzāb 33:32)

The origin of this word [°]ārif is from [°]araftu, that is: “I can sense its fragrance”; [°]arf meaning scent, perfume. Or from another meaning which is: “I can feel the cheek (*kḥadd*)”; such a person who can ‘feel’ or ‘sense’ is an [°]ārif, a knower, a gnostic of whom Allāh ﷻ says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا

fa-lammā jā[°]ahum mā [°]arafu

...and when it [the scripture] comes, that which they *know*...
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:89)

In other words their understanding is not from mentation or conscious thought but from intuitive knowing or innate knowledge. This is the difference between an [°]alim and an [°]ārif.

It is of the utmost importance to understand this crucial difference between the [°]alim and the [°]ārif.

An [°]alim is some one who is trained and goes through a recognised and thoroughly accredited course of study rather like a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer, whereas an [°]ārif reaches to the state of being an [°]ārif in an altogether different and intuitive way.

We can also say an *‘ārif* is a knower (*‘alim*) at some level, but not every *‘alim* is an *‘ārif* at any level.

Take for instance this story as a means of understanding the *‘ārif bi-llāh*: Shayban ar-Rai was a simple illiterate unlearned shepherd, and also one of the great *Ṣūfī* saints of the early *‘Islāmīc* era. He lived during the times when the four renowned *‘Imāms* of the Sunni schools of canon law were busy compiling the canon of their respective schools. One of those great scholars, *‘Imām Ṣhāfi‘ī*, considered Shayban ar-Rai to be his spiritual mentor.

Another of the four great *‘Imāms*, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, being skeptical of such an illiterate Shaykh, decided to ask him a very elementary question to ascertain his level of knowledge. *‘Imām Ṣhāfi‘ī* warned him: “Beware of thinking of him as a simpleton, for if you ask him a question with that preconceived notion, he will understand your hidden intention and put you to shame.”

‘Imām Aḥmad was, however, determined to pursue his course, so he asked him: “What is the rate of *Zakāt* that all non-indigent Muslims must pay to the poor?”. “Which *Zakāt* are you inquiring about – your *Zakat* or ours? According to your variety of knowledge or according to our way?” Surprised and always suspicious of heresy, *‘Imām Aḥmad* asked: “What? Do you claim that there are two rates of *Zakāt* in *Ṣhārī‘ah*? I would like to know what they are, and on what evidence you base your claim”. “According to *Ṣhārī‘ah* as it applies to you and to those who are on your way, it is incumbent upon every person to give away one fortieth of his gold, silver, livestock and goods to the poor. According to the *Ṣhārī‘ah*, as it applies to His slaves, the slave and all he possesses belong to their Master. So, on our way, from every forty, forty is for our Lord which leaves exactly nothing for us as everything is for Him ﷻ”.

And to further refine, or expand the term, an *‘ārif bi-llāh* is someone who knows Allāh ﷻ by Allāh ﷻ and through Allāh ﷻ by direct witnessing (*mushāhadah huduriyyah*).

‘Islām and *‘Imān* can be learned from the *‘ulemā’* (علماء), who are the people of learning but *‘Ihsān* can be learned only from *‘ulemā’ bi-llāh* (scholars of Allāh ﷻ) or the *‘arifīn* (people of knowledge) who have been directly gifted by Allāh ﷻ with the knowledge of the self and the knowledge of their *Rabb* (Lord or Sustainer).

The question arises, “Where does this knowledge come from?

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

qalū subhāḥanaka lā ʿilma lana ʾilla mā ʿallamtanā
ʾinnaka ʾanta-lʿalīmu-l-ḥakīm

They said, ‘Glory be to You!

We have no knowledge except what You have taught us.

You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:32)

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ مَرْحَمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعِلْمًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا

fawajadā ʿabdam-min ʿibadinā ʾataynahu raḥmatam-min ʿindinā
wa ʿallamnāhu mil-ladunnā ʿilman

They found a slave of Ours whom We had granted mercy from Us
and whom We had also given knowledge direct from Us.

(Suratu-l-Kahf 16:65)

This gift is called ‘*ilm min ladunnā*’ or the direct knowledge from Allāh ﷻ without intermediary.

The being *par excellence* who typifies this kind of direct knowledge from Allāh ﷻ: the, as it were, original ʿārif bi-llāh is al-Khiḍr ﷺ who is known to us from the Qurʾan in Sūrah al-Kahf ʾāyāt 61 to 83.



al-Ghazalī رحمه الله wrote about this knowledge that is without an intermediary or *‘ilm min ladunnā* in a short treatise of his titled *Risālah al-Laduniyyah*.

In the introduction to this treatise we find, “In this *Risalah*, Revelation (*wahy*/وحي) and Inspiration (*‘ilhām*/إلهام) are considered to be the “outflow” (*‘ifāḍah*) of Universal Mind and the ‘irradiation’ of Universal Soul...’revealed knowledge’ and ‘knowledge from on high’ (*al-‘ilm al-ladunī*) which is the fruit of inspiration come direct from Allāh ﷻ and are like “the radiance from the Lamp of the Invisible”, an outpouring (*fayḍ*) of the Divine Light.”

al-Ghazalī رحمه الله himself says, “Know that knowledge from on high (*al-‘ilm al-ladunī*) is the irradiation of the light of inspiration (*‘ilhām*/إلهام) and inspiration comes after completion (*tasawīyyah*), as Allāh ﷻ says,

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا

wa nafasi wa mā sawāhā

by the soul and who perfected it
(Sūratu-sh-Shams 91:7)

and perfection or completion, is the making sound or whole of the soul (*nafs*/نفس) and its return to its original disposition. Allāh ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

laqadā khalaqānā-l-‘insāna fī ‘aḥsani taqāwīm

We created the human in the best of forms
(Sūratu-t-Tin 95:4)

and this return to its original disposition is accomplished by three things:

i.... the study of all branches of knowledge and taking the greatest share of most of them

ii... genuine self-discipline and true meditation for the Prophet ﷺ alluded to this truth saying, “To the one who acts in accordance with what he knows Allāh ﷻ grants knowledge of what he does not know.” And, “To him who worshipped Allāh ﷻ in sincerity for forty mornings Allāh ﷻ made springs of wisdom to arise from his heart and manifest from his tongue.”

iii...Reflection (*murāqabah*/مراقبة) for when the soul has studied and is disciplined through knowledge and then has reflected on what was known to it, in accordance with what reflection requires, then the door of the Invisible is opened...so he who reflects becomes one of those who understands and a window to the Invisible World is opened in his heart and ...it is as the Prophet ﷺ said, “To reflect for one hour is better than seventy years of devotion.”

To return now to al-Khidr ؑ who is, as we have said, the being *par excellence* who typifies direct knowledge.

The Qurʾānic story (al-Kahf 18: 61-83) of the meeting of Mūsā ؑ and Khidr ؑ begins with a quest undertaken by Mūsā ؑ and his servant (possibly Joshua) for the place where the two seas meet (*barzakḥ*), inner and outer, sweet and salty, known and unknown.

As they set out Mūsā ؑ tells his servant:

لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُمُبًا

lā ʾabraḥu ḥattā ʾabālughā majmaʿa-l-baḥrayni ʾaw ʾamḍiya ḥuqubā

‘I will not give up until I reach the meeting-place of the two seas,
even if I must press on for many years.’

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:65)

At one point, after mistakenly they have passed the confluence, Mūsā ؑ tells his servant, “Prepare our food for this journey has tired us.” The servant says, “Remember when we were resting by the rock? I forgot the fish. I remember leaving it on a rock but Shayṭān made me forget to pay attention to it.” and then adds “The wonder of it is, the fish revived and jumped back into the sea!” Mūsā ؑ cries out, “That loss is a sign of what we are seeking!” So they retrace their steps, going back to the confluence, where,

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعِلْمًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا

fawajadā ʿabdam-min ʿibādinā ʾataynāhu raḥmatam-min ʿindinā
wa ʿallamnāhu mil-ladunnā ʿilmā

They found a slave of Ours whom We had granted mercy from Us
and whom We had also given knowledge direct from Us

(Suratu-l-Kahf 16:65)

the key words being “*mil-ladunnā ʿilmā*.”

Now the reason Mūsā ﷺ sought al-Khīḍr ﷺ in the first place is explained by the Prophet ﷺ in a story that can found in at-Tabari. and here I paraphrase, “One day, when Mūsā ﷺ was preaching, someone asked, “Who is the wisest man of all?” Mūsā ﷺ answered that it was he himself. Allāh ﷻ then revealed to the arrogant Mūsā ﷺ that there was someone wiser and that he could be found at ‘the confluence of two seas,’ and that Mūsā ﷺ “would meet him when he lost his fish.” Which as we know is the story.

When they met him Mūsā ﷺ said to him, “May I follow you that you may guide me true with the knowledge you have been taught?”

al-Khīḍr ﷺ said, “You will not be able to bear with me. For how can you endure what is beyond your comprehension?”

“If Allāh ﷻ wills, you will find me patient,” said Mūsā ﷺ, “and I will obey you in all things.”

“If you must follow me...then do,” he said, “but do not question me about anything until I myself mention it to you.”

What happens, and here I paraphrase again, is that al-Khīḍr ﷺ first puts a hole in a boat and then kills a young man and then works to build a wall for some people who are unwelcoming and don’t pay them. Each time Mūsā ﷺ questions him as to why he has done what he did and al-Khīḍr ﷺ reminds him that he told him not to ask him about what he was doing, reminding him they he will not be able to put up with him, and finally tells him that they have to part company, but also explains to him why he did what he did.

He put the hole in the boat which belonged to poor people to save it from being taken by the king who was seizing people’s property, he killed the boy whose parents were believers because he ‘knew’ (‘*arafa*’) the boy was no good and would bring grief to his parents and that, in any case, they would have another son who would be good, and he built the wall without cost for the people who refused to welcome them to hide a treasure that belonged to two orphan boys so that no one would find it until they came of age,⁷ saying,

“I certainly did not do any of this of my own accord. This is the inner explanation of the things that you were unable to bear with patience.”

7. [For those who want to know the story in full please read Sūratu-l-Kahf18:61-83]

وَمَا فَعَلْنَاهُ عَنْ أَمْرِیْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

wamā fa°altuhu °an °amrī dhalika ta°wīlu ma lam taṣṭi° °alayhi ṣabrā
(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:61-83)

°Islāmic tradition describes al-Kḥiḍr ؑ as *mu°allim al-anbiyā°* (Teacher of the Prophets), for the guidance he has shown every prophet since his birth. The one prophet whom al-Kḥiḍr ؑ did not teach is Muḥammad ﷺ. Significantly, it is he who taught Kḥiḍr ؑ; an inversion of the master-disciple relationship exemplified by Kḥiḍr/Mūsā ؑ. Having the young, unlettered Muḥammad ﷺ teach the ancient al-Kḥiḍr ؑ underscores the superiority of the prophet-hood of Muḥammad ﷺ and the fact that he too is a repository of intuitive knowledge emanating from Allāh ﷻ (°ilm min ladunni).

How often Muḥammad ﷺ and al-Kḥiḍr ؑ met is not recorded, but his appearance at the funeral of Muḥammad ﷺ is related as follows:

“A powerful-looking, fine-featured, handsome man with a white beard came leaping over the backs of the people till he reached - where the sacred body lay. Weeping bitterly, he turned toward the Companions ؓ and paid his condolences. Abu Bakr ؓ and °Alī ؑ said that he was al-Kḥiḍr ؑ.” (al-Bayhaqī)

That Abu Bakr ؓ and °Alī ؑ are the ones who identify him is noteworthy. They are the only two Companions of the Prophet ﷺ to whom are ascribed esoteric (*baṭīnī*) knowledge, which is why all Ṣūfī chains of investiture (*salāsīl*) derive from them alone. This hidden knowledge is not learned, it must be bestowed by Allāh ﷻ.

The honorific name *al-Kḥiḍr* means “The Green One” derived from the Arabic (*al-°akhḍar/الأخضر*) because after al-Kḥiḍr ؑ dove into the Water of Life which he found by using a shining jewel brought from Paradise by °Ādam ؑ “all the flesh of his body became bluish-green and his garments likewise” – but that is another story.

To Ṣūfis, al-Kḥiḍr ؑ holds a very dear place and amongst them there is almost a consensus that al-Kḥiḍr ؑ is still alive, and many respected figures and shuyukḥ claim to have had personal encounters with him, including al-Gḥawṭ al-°Aẓīm Abd al-Qadir al-Jīlānī, °Imam an-Nawawī, °Ibn Arabī, °Abdu-l Azīz ad-Dabbagh and Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Fāsī, Allāh ﷻ sanctify their secret.

Ibn ʿAtāʾ Illah in *Laṭāʾif al-Minan* (1:84-98) states that there is consensus among the Ṣūfīs that al-Kḥiḍr ﷺ is always alive somewhere.

Indeed the attainment of spiritual station is confirmed by an individual's association or contact with al-Kḥiḍr ﷺ. In the Seal of the Saints (*Kḥātim al-ʿAwliyāʾ*/خاتم الأولياء), the earliest surviving detailed hagiography in ʿIslām, at-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 932) enumerates the seven signs of the Friends of Allāh ﷺ (*al-ʿawliyāʾ Allāh*/الأولياء الله):

“The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said: ‘When they see, they remember Allāh ﷻ’ This means that they have the power of truth, so that no one opposes them but they overcome him with it. That they are given clairvoyance. That they have inspiration.

“That those who injure them receive quick retribution. That all tongues praise them except those of the envious. That their prayers are answered and that signs occur, such as their disappearing into the earth, walking on water, and speaking with al-Kḥiḍr ﷺ, the one who goes through the world on sea and land, mountain and plain, seeking them in longing and sympathy for them.” (at-Tirmidhī)

These then are the people of *baqāʾ*, the ones who endure, the abiding, the present, those who remain and those who have returned from the state of annihilation in Allāh ﷻ to the life of subsistence and residing (*baqāʾ*) in daily life, by one who recognizes and knows (ʿārif) through direct experience the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and the vastness of His Dominion and the expanse of the Benevolence and Mercy of Allāh ﷻ and, having recognised it, acts upon it in life to benefit himself and others.



We have come a long way in this account from the individual Muslim living in the world, content with his or her dīn, praying five times daily, fasting the month of Ramaḍān, paying the Zakāt, and living with the intention of making the Ḥajj or, having done so, and content with the blessed memories of the Ancient House and the tawaf and the Plains of ʿArafat, and seeing or feeling no real need to go beyond that existence, to the one who having done all that wants more out of their life as a Muslim and begins to take on maybe the fasting on Mondays and Thursdays and the White Days around the full moon and, perhaps, beginning to get up at night to pray.

And having done these things begins to have ‘experiences’ of one kind and another which maybe sets them off looking for books that help clarify what is happening to them or causes them to seek out someone who can begin to help them to sort out and understand or, somehow, put these experiences in context, and after going through that for a while seeks out or comes across, by following arcane clues, one of the ‘inheritors’ of the Prophet ﷺ and who, after, establishing a relationship of trust and mutuality finally make the momentous decision to put their hand in the hand of that one fulfilling the saying of Allāh ﷻ and witnessing the Truth of His Words.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ
بِذَلِكَ اللَّهُ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

°inna-lladhīna yubāyi°ūnaka °innamā yubāyi°ūna-llah :
yadu-llāhi fawqa °aydīhim.

Those who pledge you their allegiance pledge allegiance to Allāh.
The Hand of Allāh is above their hands.

(Sūratu-l-Faḥ 48:10)

and
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ
yāā °ayyuha-l-ladhīna °amanū °aṭī°u-llāha wa °aṭī°u -r-rasūla
wa °ūli-l-°amri minkum

Oh you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger,
and those from among you who are invested with authority!
(Sūrah an-Nisā° 4:59)

and paraphrasing Suzanne’s song

And you want to travel with him – And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust him.”

And so you do and he takes you to the mountain top and from the mountain top you see a world which you always somehow knew existed but somehow you just couldn’t see it on your own and were left thinking that you were only the ‘who’ you saw in your bathroom mirror and the world was the same.

But instead he showed you and you saw the other world; a world of such immense beauty and profundity that you could barely believe it.

And yet it was real – indeed more real than anything had even been real before (and after) it and for the first time, perhaps, though you may have glimpsed a few times in a sunlit street or in the woods when you were really young or when you first fell in love, you knew what it really was to be alive and, indeed, why life really existed, and why, when Allāh ﷻ made the world, He saw that it was good.

And, perhaps again, in that state you became a drinker and a drunkard and wanted nothing more than to drink of that beauty and profundity for ever.

And again perhaps you are granted a sip (or more) of the pure ‘taste’ (*dhāwq*/ذاق) of bounteous love.

And then you understood why, when Sīdī Abu-l-Ḥasasn ﷺ was questioned about love, said, “Love is something granted by Allāh ﷻ to the heart of His Slave which distracts him from everything else other than Him, to the point that you see your lower self inclining to Him, the intellect protecting itself by spiritual knowledge of Him, the spirit rapt in His Presence, the inner secret soul overwhelmed in contemplation of Him. The slave asks for more, and more is given, and he enters into the sweetest of delights of spiritual communion with Him. He is clad in rainment that befits the approach to Him upon the carpet of proximity and he comes into contact with virgin reality and revealed science. For that reason it is said that the *awliyā*’ are the brides of Allāh ﷻ.”

The one who questioned said to the Shāykh ﷺ, “Now that I have been granted to taste love tell me, what is the drink (*shārb*) of love, what is the the cup (*kā’s*) of love, who is the cupbearer (*saqī*), what is the tasting (*dhāwq*), what is the drinking (*shurb*), what is repletion (*riy*), what is intoxication (*sukr*). and what is sobriety (*ṣahw*)?”

He ﷺ replied, “The drink is the light radiating from the beauty of the Beloved. The cup is the distillation of the subtle essence of the Mercy (*luṭf*) which brings that light into contact with the lips of the heart. The Cupbearer is He who befriends the greatest of the elect and the righteous ones from among His slaves. He is Allāh ﷻ, the One who knows the capacities and affairs of His Friends. If to anyone there is disclosed that Beauty, if he enjoys it for one breath or two, and then the veil is dropped over it, he is a ‘taster’ (*dhawāq*/ذواق) who will yearn for the rest of his life for another ‘taste’.

“If he continues for an hour or more sipping from the cup of love he becomes the ‘drinker’ (*shārab*/شارب) and if the experience becomes continuous and he drinks until his veins become filled with the treasured lights of Allāh, then that is repletion (*tukhmah*/تخمه).

“Often one becomes unconscious of sense and mental perceptions so that he knows neither what is said nor what he said – that is intoxication (*thamila*/ثمل).”

And you finally get it and then you too are lost, subsumed in that intoxication and this is your fanā° and time passes but you have no idea if it is minutes or years or centuries and it doesn’t matter.

فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوْا فَتَجِدُ آلَٰهَ

fa°aynamā tuwallū fathamma wajhu-llah
wherever you turn there is the Face of Allāh
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:115)

When travelers to the Truth have gone beyond all these steps and have become heroes of annihilation in Allāh ﷻ, the colors of subsistence with Allāh ﷻ begin to appear to them from all horizons. They also go beyond one dimension of “there is no deity.” This new dimension confronts them every moment during their journey and they reach a new dimension of “but Allāh ﷻ.” Due to their taking larger steps and due to the uninterrupted shower of Divine favors, the universal Lordship and complete Subsistence begins to manifest Itself on their horizon. A time comes and they feel that His Throne has embraced the whole universe, and rising by the stairs of repentance, penitence and contrition, which comprise the way of turning to Him completely, they are immersed in the lights of His Divinity. They drown in the extraordinary pleasures of feeling awe and fear of Him in their acts of worship. They take a great pleasure in listening to the Divine Speech – the Qur’ān. Finding themselves sometimes in the clime of self-possession that is embedded in fear, and sometimes on the hills of alertness that are embedded in awe, and sometimes in the oceans of mercy, they experience fear and expectation, sadness and rejoicing, all together at the same time, and try not to fall away from His door. Unburdening themselves to Him in every thought, concept, utterance and breath, they become heroes of following the Divine commandment:

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

wa ʿbud rabbaka ḥattā yaʿtiyaka-l-yaqīn

And serve your Lord until there comes to you
the Hour that is Certain.

(Sūratu-l-Ḥijr 15:99)

and without being content with their worshipping, they advance further and further. They know that when they stop, both the way and the journey will come to an end and there will be nowhere to go and they can no longer have the ambition of reaching their destination. The journey is toward the Infinite One. Unending endeavor in this world is reflected as endless favors from the realms beyond.

Shaykh abu-l-Ḥasan ربه says, “and sometimes they are turned back from oblivion to remembrance (*dhikr*); mystical states (*ʿahwāl*) and the statutory injunctions (*furūd*)). They are not veiled from the physical attributes in spite of their having drunk as much as they could. This is the time of their sobriety, of the broadening of their mental vision and of the increase of their works. So by the stars of knowledge and the moon of unity they are guided across the night and by the sun of spiritual knowledge they obtain light.”

This then is time of their *baqāʾ* and so they are returned, and in turn become part of the journeys of others.



Here I would like to mention the views of one of the great masters of the way, Shaykh Junaid Baghdādī ربه, regarding *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ*.

He said that the third stage of *fanāʾ* is the extinction of ego, the devotee feels that he is with Allāh ربه. This later caused a lot of controversy between adherents of Ibn ʿArabi and Aḥmad Sirhindi,

According to Aḥmad Sirhindi the experience of *fanāʾ*, or the forgetting of the self in order to merge with the Divine, is an imagined, not a real experience. In reality it is “*fana shuhūdī*” or perceived annihilation of merging with the Divine. According to exponents of Ibn ʿArabi, on the other hand, *fanāʾ* is a real existential experience. Both however agree that in the last stage of *fanāʾ* the traveller finally enters into the state of *baqīʾ bi-llāh*, and that *baqīʾ bi-llāh* is the fruit and reward of *fanāʾ fi-llāh*, be that actual or perceived.

But since Allāh ﷻ is the Absolute and all creation contingent the traveller in any case could never truly comprehend the Divine Existence as it Is in Truth but only that which the relative can comprehend of the Absolute. He may be with Allāh ﷻ but he is not part of Him. He is but a humble servant and Allāh ﷻ is beyond all bounds and limits. No one can ever, in Truth unite with Allāh ﷻ physically. Fanā°, as a final station where the traveller is overcome by absorption or intoxication, can be seriously damaging, because in such a state one cannot fulfil his duties which Allāh ﷻ has prescribed for all of Bani °Ādam, and travellers can find themselves sucked down the whirlpool which has drowned many souls before, and live out their life as a *majdhūb* (مجنوب) whose faculties are, as it were, paralyzed or confused by the effect of the Divine attraction.

When the traveller attains the stage of *baqī° bi-llāh* after *fanā° fi-llāh*, then the traveller returns from the state of intoxication to the state of wisdom and, retaining his personal traits and characteristics which now are impressed by a deep reflection and knowledge of the Name and Attributes (°*asmā° wa sifāt*), such a being becomes, as we mentioned earlier, a guiding force for others and, given the aptitude teaches others in turn or, lacking the aptitude for teaching, becomes a source of blessing (*barakah*) for the community of believers.

So we pray to Allāh ﷻ:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

°ihdina-ṣ-ṣirāṭa-l-mustaqīm

guide us into the Straight Path

(Sūratu-l-Fātiḥah 1:6)

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

ṣirāṭa-l-ladhīna an°amta °alayhim

ghayri-l-maghḍūbi °alayhim wa la-ḍ-ḍāāllīn

the Path of those You have blessed,
not of those with anger on them, nor of the misguided.

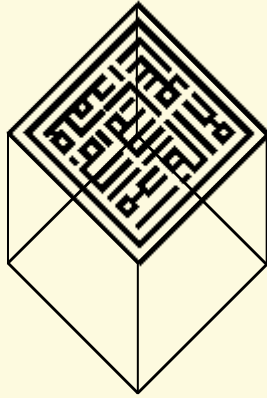
(Sūratu-l-Fātiḥah 1:6)

Amīn

May Allāh ﷻ grant peace and blessings on the Prophet and his family

☆ اَمَّا هَٰذَا # اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلٰى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ ☆

NOTES



noon hierographers
green mountain
virginia
usa